PROVINCIAL

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the

BRIDGING THE GAP, MUNICIPALITIES IN ACTION
ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Halifax, Nova Scotia
February 14-16th, 1990

40997

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RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEW BRUNSWICK DELEGATES
IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE, HALIFAX
FEBRUARY 14-16TH, 1990

At the conclusion of the Atlantic Infrastructure Conference, Bridging the Gap: Municipalities in Action, separate wrap-up sessions were held for each of the four provincial groups in attendance. The New Brunswick session was chaired by the President of the Provincial-Municipal Council, Councillor Valmond Martin.

Councillor Martin opened the session by noting that some action had already taken place in the province on the two main areas discussed by the Conference; environmental and transportation infrastructure. With respect to environmental infrastructure, the Province had announced a six-year water and sewer capital program that would involve a provincial expenditure of some $86 million and a combined provincial-municipal total of $140 million. On the transportation side, the P-MC had proposed formation of a joint provincial-municipal technical committee to investigate the nature and extent of existing infrastructure deficiencies and to propose an action plan to deal with them. An answer had been promised but non had been received as yet.

The New Brunswick group considered what further steps could be taken to address the infrastructure needs of municipalities in the province.

It was suggested that municipalities consider an annual event such as the conference just concluded in order that municipalities might be kept-up-to-date on developments throughout the region. A number of individuals expressed the view that the conference had been very informative and helpful.

A number of those present felt that the infrastructure issue would have to be addressed over a lengthy period of time in order to give those municipalities with few financial resources the ability to participate in whatever programs were available. It was felt that

a five-year program, even if one could be developed, would be too short a time period for many of the province's smallest municipalities. A program extending over ten or fifteen years was seen as preferable.

Concern was expressed that federal money would be directed towards the larger communities that were able to lobby successfully on their own while smaller municipalities would be left to fend for themselves. It was felt that the federal funds for the Halifax Harbour cleanup should be used as an example of the Government of Canada involving itself in the municipal infrastructure problem notwithstanding the constitutional objections that had sometimes been raised. It was felt that the similar needs of smaller municipalities would have to be re-emphasized continually to federal and provincial governments.

A number of those present also thought federal funds would only be tapped to the extent the infrastructure issue was linked to environmental needs. The environment was seen as one of the principal issues of the 90s and many of those in attendance felt that this offered a mechanism to access federal funds that might not otherwise be available.

It was also felt that municipalities should be pressuring the Province to lobby on their behalf at the federal level for whatever assistance could be obtained. Specific recommendations should be put before the Province and the Province should then be encouraged to carry those recommendations to the federal level. It was seen that the technical study proposed by the Council would be very useful in that it would give the provincial government specific facts and figures to assist in lobbying on behalf of municipalities. The study might also highlight needs in the province that were different from those elsewhere.

Many of those present felt that within the transportation field

priority would have to be given to the upgrading of the TransCanada Highway throughout the province.

Strong concern was expressed that total financing available in the province would have to be adequate so that municipalities that were successful in accessing funds did not do so to the detriment of other municipalities. It would also have to be emphasized to the Province that other programs such as the unconditional grant must not suffer in order to compensate for provincial assistance to municipalities on the infrastructure issue.

The Water and Sewer Capital Program announced by the Minister of the Environment was seen as a starting point but it was felt municipalities ought to have a more detailed plan to offer the Province. One of the problems experienced by municipalities to date was that they simply asked for money but were unable to give direction as to specifically how the money ought to be spent. Control of the funding therefore fell to the Province by default. Municipalities asking for funds would have to be able to offer specific plans as to how, where, and when the funds were to be spent.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NOVA SCOTIA DELEGATES
IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE, HALIFAX
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1) LET US START DOING SOME THINGS ON OUR OWN. The Oral Roberts School of Public Policy, in which we continually threaten that disaster will happen unless the Federal Government joins in, has failed. It is perfectly obvious the Federal Government has no intention, at this point, of joining in so, we should begin doing some things on our own.

2) There needs to be an updating of information. We need a new data base on infrastructure needs, and particularly, how to find an inexpensive way to prepare an accurate data base for smaller municipalities.

3) The possibility of management strategies. This was particularly well demonstrated, on one of the days of the conference, with the pavement management strategy put forward by St. John's. There must be other management strategies that we should be using, particularly as regards our infrastructure.

4) Environmental issues ranked high in concerns.

   a) Possibly the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities should set up a task force on the environment;

   b) There needs to be a demonstration of various inexpensive strategies that all municipalities can look at the work and, to be seen to be working at the local level;

c) Recommendation to the Province to beef up its environmental staff/department. The recent re-organization of the Department of Environment is to be welcomed, but many people still have reservations about the number of staff and personnel available to do much needed jobs. Recent mention of blue box support in the Speech from the Throne is promising.

5) The inclusion of <u>new</u> infrastructure into the infrastructure issue is important from many rural municipalities and some expanding ones.

6) It was agreed how important it was that we <u>educate</u> both the <u>public and school children</u> about the importance and cost of major infrastructure - and municipal services. Public acceptance of service without explanation and understanding needs to stop. We should be talking to schools about infrastructure and the costs, and we should be talking more to our public.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR DELEGATES IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE, HALIFAX FEBRUARY 14-16TH, 1990

The delegates put forward three summary recommendations to the Conference.

Mayor Douglas Sheppard of Gander delivered the recommendations to the Conference as President Sam Connors had been called away on a personal matter.

The recommendations were:

1) Continue to seek and gain a commitment of financial assistance from the Federal Government.

   - Most municipalities in our province, especially smaller ones, have few financial resources to draw upon and limited options or opportunities for expanding the municipal tax base. A financial commitments form the Federal Government would be a key element in beginning the self-help process as a more economic diversification;

   - Both replacement and/or repair of existing infrastructure and placement of new infrastructure needs to be addressed.

2) Highway development needs to be given a greater priority by both the Provincial and Federal Governments:

   - With the demise of the railroad in insular Newfoundland greater demands are being placed on existing highroads. A more rapid re-development of the Trans-Canada Highway and of secondary feeder highways needs to take place;

- The Trans-Labrador Highway must be given much greater priority. A serviceable all weather highway from Western Labrador to the Strait of Belle Isle would link and open to development, particularly in the Tourism area a major portion of Eastern Canada, benefiting both the Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

3) Municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador need to develop rational, effective and self-sustaining recycling programs coupled with long term waste reduction programs in order to reduce burdens on landfill and incinerator facilities.

The delegates felt that this conference had been most useful and that subsequent conferences should be held. It is recommended that the next concentrate on the relationships among the interlined subjects of Environment, Infrastructure and Finance.

Mayor Sheppard extends a cordial invitation to his colleagues to hold the next conference in Gander, Newfoundland.